

Stranger

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Summary: Ivan grew up as a stranger within his own home. A simple recollection of Ivan's childhood in Kalay.

***Chapter 1*: Stranger**

Hello to whoever is reading this!

I haven't written in a while so be nice! Also, please excuse any mistake; English is not my first language.

This is my interpretation of Ivan's childhood in Kalay.

Enjoy!

Stranger

One might think that such a worldly, important commercial city as Kalay would be inhabited by open-minded, accepting people. Hammet, one of the world's greatest and richest merchants, lives in Kalay. He leaves on numerous travels, brings back products from all around the world. People from other cities, with who he has done business, come visit him regularly. And yet, some years ago, he brought back something very special, from far away, a small child. A child with hair and eyes of weird colors, with weird abilities, a child disliked by children and adults of Kalay alike. This child was me.

His friends in Kalay were reluctant of Hammet keeping the child of a stranger. His wife did not want to raise it. The merchant finally decided to give me to a childless couple of servants that worked in his house. I was raised by the two of them, two very caring 'parents', Sophia and Julian. She was a simple housemaid and he worked in the kitchen.

The first few years of my life were very peaceful, as I was too young to notice the hostility of the villagers towards me. My hair was so pale, it was almost white. My eyes were of a pale purple. Nobody else looked like me, no one. When I walked hand in hand with Sophia, to buy food or on a simple evening walk, people stared at the woman and her strange child. I often asked her why they were looking at us and she would just answer that nothing was wrong, to not pay attention. Sophia had wanted a child so bad, she was in denial of the fact that 'her child' was different, strange, could simply not fit in. I would be satisfied with her answer, and keep waking. I was very careless, like any other small child.

Even as a toddler, my strange abilities were manifesting. I would blow wind in my parent's stuff and watch it fall all around me, like snow. Whenever I did that, Sophia and Julian would stop me immediately. They wanted me to be like other children so badly. But I couldn't help myself, it was instinctive.

The looks, the whispers, the laughs started to annoy me when I started school. Then, I was constantly surrounded by other children. And children are definitely not as subtle as adults. They openly mocked me, laughed at me or pulled my hair. When I asked my mother to explain why they were doing that, she would not give me a clear answer. They were just mean, she would say. Children are mean.

They would make fun of my blond hair, my purple eyes, my weird powers, my diminutive stature and my purple eyebrows. I have always hated my eyebrows. I still do and probably always will. It's around that time I decided to let my hair grow long, especially my bangs, so they would cover my eyebrows. Other children didn't make fun of my

eyebrows as much. Instead, they would say I looked like a girl, which was not better...

I began to close up on myself, I avoided contact with other children, I stayed alone and it was fine by me. Around that time, I learned how to write and read in school. A whole new world opened up to me, a world where I could be alone. I started reading a lot of books, especially about the history of Weyard, about other countries, about other people. I wanted to leave.

The teachers liked me a lot, because I made significant progress in my studies and worked very hard. I could read and write perfectly before anybody else in the class could. The fact that I was the teacher's favourite together with my strange appearance could only mean trouble. As I grew up, my classmates got meaner and meaner.

By the time I turned 10, they would hit me regularly. By then, teachers didn't care that I was smart. I was just the creepy kid in their class. They would rarely defend me. I would go home and I would cry. My parents didn't know what to do. I felt Julian didn't care much anymore. He was overworked and I was too much to handle. Sophia was genuinely worried about me but she was helpless. I wanted to get away.

Reading helped me get away. I would read about 3 books a week. I couldn't get enough. I also started to write a lot. I kept somewhat of a diary, but I wasn't very consistent. I would write short stories. I wrote just for the fun of writing. I enjoyed the simple action of writing, of putting pen on paper. For a 10 year old boy, I had superb hand-writing, and I was very proud of it. I could also write very quickly. Hammet read some of my texts and was very impressed. Here and there I would do some work for him, like doing the

inventory of his stock in Kalay. Then, I could be alone in a big stock room and do nothing but write.

I was a very lonely child. I had no friends but my books. People made fun of me and hurt me regularly. I could feel my grip on sanity slowly loosening. I was too stressed, I was sad.

When I felt particularly sad, my powers would manifest. The wind would blow harder, shaking the trees; clouds would set in. I hated when that happened. I had the impression that then everybody knew I wasn't feeling well. Looking back, I don't people cared much, it was just a bit of wind, it was just a bit of my pain.

And then the voices came. They came one morning during class, pounding my head like a hammer, all the thoughts of my classmates, entering my head at once. Grabbing my head in pain, I laid it down on my desk and whimpered. All the voices were so loud, saying things like 'This is complicated' or 'I don't care about school, I want to go home'. I couldn't make out all that they were thinking; there were too many messages at the same time. I barely managed to hear what my teacher was telling me, something like 'Stop acting like that Ivan, you're disrupting class.' After she said that, the attention of every single student in the class turned to me. Their thoughts were even louder. 'Ivan is such a weirdo', 'Look at him pretending he's in pain', 'Stupid Ivan'. They were getting louder and louder, they were laughing and laughing and laughing... It was unbearable. The voices were just too loud. Clenching my hands hard on my head, almost pulling my hair out, I started to scream. As I did, their thoughts and their words got louder. 'So creepy', 'Look at him, screaming like a dumbass', 'I feel like hitting that idiot'. Their laughs, their insults, they seemed to be spinning around me. I thought my head was about to explode. I suddenly felt the world crumbling,

darkness surrounding me, death claiming me, as it all turned black and silence fell.

Next thing I could remember was waking up in my bed. Alone. The voices were gone. I could breathe. I taught I had died at that moment, in class. Or that I had gone completely insane. Suddenly, I could hear another voice. A woman. 'Oh my poor child, I hope you're okay. I love you so much.' It was Sophia. She would rarely tell me she loved me. Hearing that made me feel better. She walked into my room and spoon fed me. I was tired.

She took care of me for the next week. She would barely allow me to get up to use the bathroom; I had to stay in bed, according to her. She cared for me, showered me with love and attention for a whole week. I could hear whatever she was thinking and she really did care. This was probably one of the best weeks of my life. It was only years later that I finally explained to her what had truly happened

While I was lying in my bed, I could hear the thoughts of people passing outside my house. 'I need to go buy bread', 'I hope my husband comes home early tonight', 'Those flowers are beautiful!' Their thoughts were peaceful, calming. It was like they weren't attacking me, like my classmates' thoughts were. I could often hear Julian's thoughts as well. 'I'm so tired', 'I work too much'. Poor Julian. Before that, I hadn't realised he was overworked.

During that week, I tried to teach myself how to control my newly found power. By concentrating on my own thoughts, others' thoughts seemed to die out. Over the course of the next few months, I learned to control my mind reading abilities.

After the week I had spent at home, I was not ready to go back to school. I was scared. I had had enough. My mother talked about my issues to Hammet, who had always taken an active role in my life. He was satisfied of the jobs I would perform for him, so he decided to hire me as a personal assistant of some sort. He wanted me to keep the inventory, keep track of sales, and write letters for him, that sort of thing. He wanted me to go with him on his travels.

When he proposed that to me, I was ecstatic. I could finally travel, see the world and get away from Kalay. Sophia hesitated. She felt I was too young to leave school, to start working and to travel. I didn't care. I wanted to go. After seeing how much I needed this, she finally decided to let me go.

For the next 5 years, I accompanied Hammet on his travels as his personal assistant. I did my job well and he appreciated my efforts. Lady Layana also started to like me. Reading her thoughts, I could tell that she somewhat regretted giving me away, because she was the aging childless woman now. I was shown true appreciation for the first time in my life and it felt great. But, there was still something missing.

I was rarely in Kalay, as Hammet would travel a lot. Whenever I was in Kalay, the children didn't bother me too much, because I worked for the richest man in the city. I didn't get to see my parents much, but it didn't bother me. I grew distant, I didn't care anymore. By reading their thoughts, I learned that they weren't my true parents and I did not wish to see them. After learning that I felt lost. I had always felt I didn't belong, and then I knew why.

I wasn't the weird child anymore. I was the stranger, and that's how people treated me. I was just passing by, I would

soon leave for elsewhere, and I might come back. They always pretended I simply wouldn't come back. I had lost my place, whatever little place I had occupied in this town; I was now nothing to these people.

And yet, in every other town I went too, it would be the same. I was a stranger everywhere. I was always a traveler, a passer-by.

On one of his business travels, Hammet visited a small town called Vault. It was fairly close to Kalay, but he rarely went there, because it was so small. On that particular day, he decided to stop. On our way there, we got a witness a very strange event. In the distance, we saw, and we definitely heard, the eruption of strange mountain, close to a small town called Vale. Purple stones fell from the sky. The eruption could have probably been seen from very far away. It was a very strange spectacle, a spectacle of a great beauty. I felt strange watching that. I felt his event was particular, that it was going to have a great impact, on my life and on the world.

After we got in Vault, the townspeople bought some of Hammet's merchandise, and I got to observe them. They all seemed to be very nice people. When they would look at me, most of them did not think negative thoughts. They would think, 'What peculiar appearance! He must be a very interesting fellow!', 'What beautiful purple eyes!' or, 'He seems to be doing quite a good job for such a young boy!' They were all very nice. I observed how they all seemed to know each other, help out each other, welcome each other as if they were family. I had always longed for such an atmosphere. On that day, I had sworn to myself to come back and live here someday. Maybe, here in Vault, I could find a little place for me, where I could belong.

That night, we had stayed at the inn of the town, as we would always do. I had my own room, but Hammet would always leave certain things with me. He always wanted me to look after this weird rod he calls the 'Shaman's Rod'. When I would ask him why, he would always say something vague, saying something about my destiny and what not. I never really believed there was such a thing as destiny. Probably until that day.

The next morning, when I got up, I found the rod was missing. In sheer panic, I ran to Hammet's room to tell him the grim news. Upset, he had told me that he still had to pack and move on to his next business trip; the people of Lunpa were waiting for his goods. He then said that I should stay behind and look for the rod on my own. That seemed like an awful duty for a 15 year old boy, but I did feel that the rod being stolen was entirely my fault. I had been negligent, as I let someone break into my room. I had decided to stay. Hammet simply told me to go back to Kalay once I had found the rod. The way to Kalay was shorter and safer than the way to Lunpa.

The first place I had gone to was the mayor's house. The mayor of Kalay was a personal friend of Hammet and was the first person to greet us when we came to the town. When I had told him what happened to Hammet's precious rod, he answered, upset, that Hammet was not the only victim. Many people in Kalay had their belongings stolen from their homes. He told me that the town's authorities were currently investigating the mysterious disappearances, and that I should simply wait until they find the culprits.

But I wanted to be useful. I couldn't simply sit around and do nothing. I decided to investigate on my own. After all, I had some abilities that gave me a clear advantage over the investigators. I went around town reading the thoughts of

people, trying to gather information about the robberies. I thought I caught a glimpse of somebody that seemed suspicious, but he got out of my range and I ended up losing him.

The next, I was hanging around the mayor's house when two boys, probably a little older than me, walked into the door and started talking to the house's occupants. They had informed the two visitors of who I was and of what little they knew of my abilities and they came up to me. Reading their minds, I could tell, they were just like me. They caught me reading their thoughts. It was the first I had met someone who could tell I was reading their minds.

They introduced themselves as Isaac and Garet, even if I already knew their names. We talked for quite a while and I even let them try reading each other's mind, which I had never done. It felt great to let somebody else know how it felt to read minds, how it felt to be me. They seemed to find this quite amusing. Garet was a bit scared at first but definitely enjoyed reading his friend's mind. As they laughed and talked, I felt good, I felt I was actually integrated in their group. They decided to help me find the Shaman's rod.

I walked them to the inn so they could rest and I spotted some very strange men. They seemed nervous, like they had something to hide. Isaac and Garet helped me trap them so I could read their minds and find out if they truly were the culprits. I read their thoughts and figured out where they were hiding their bounty.

My two new friends and I climbed up the ladder that led to the roof of the inn. It had struck me how strange a place to hide the fruits of one's crimes it was. We walked into a wide room with many chests, containing all the goods that were

stolen from the townspeople and from my good master, Hammet.

The thieves quickly caught up to us and attempted to protect what they had stolen. Then, I got to see for the first time what special powers Isaac and Gareth possessed. I was extremely impressed by the rocks Isaac threw at our enemies and the flames Gareth sent at them. I tried to hold up my own with my gusts of wind. The three thieves were quickly defeated. For the first time in my life, I had seen other people with strange powers; I couldn't help but feel better about myself. For once, I wasn't alone.

The mayor of Vault joined us in the room where the treasures were kept. He thanked the three of us. I was glad I got to be helpful. The mayor took the objects that belonged to him and to the sanctum and let me have the Shaman's rod. Isaac and Gareth were glad they got to help me and got back down to the inn to rest.

The next morning, they were about to leave and I decided to meet them at the entrance of the town to tell them my goodbyes and wish them good luck on their adventure. They asked to leave with them, that they could use my abilities on their journey, but I declined. I was asked by Hammet to go back to Kalay once I had found the Shaman's rod. Disappointed, they left, as I watched them walk away.

I went back to the inn to get my stuff. As I was about to pack the rod, I couldn't help but look at it for a while. All of Hammet's words about destiny and what not, came to my mind. I saw Isaac and Gareth, two boys just like me. Maybe, just maybe, their journey, their destiny, was also mine.

I took a decision. I would follow them wherever they go, and help however I could.

I finished my packing and ran, ran as fast as I could. I knew they would go to Goma Range, and I had to catch up to them, I had to. I ran and ran. Even if my legs wanted to give in, I ran.

I ran after my destiny, I ran after the two strangers.

And the rest is history :)

I hope it wasn't too angsty, I did not intend it to be. I tried to be as accurate as I could but I did bend the story in my favour.

Golden Sun DS coming out in 2010! I can't wait!!!

Thank you for reading! Please review! :)